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Sustainable development

Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/214. It provides an update on the follow-up to the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and new developments, taking into account the outcome document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015, and the range of commitments contained therein, and the outcome of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, to be held from 25 to 27 September 2015 in New York.

This report also highlights the main outcome of the third meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which was convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, and whose theme was "Strengthening integration, implementation and review: the high-level political forum on sustainable development after 2015". The discussions at the high-level political forum provided important insights regarding its role. Among other developments since the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, has been the monitoring by the Secretariat of the implementation of partnerships and the voluntary commitments made at that Conference. The Secretary-General has also proposed an approach to follow-up on partnerships for small island developing states. The report provides recommendations for the consideration of Member States with respect to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

* A/70/150.



I. Introduction

1. On 25 September 2015, the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda will adopt the declaration entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development" containing the agreed sustainable development goals. On 16 July 2015, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development adopted the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Conference, which is an integral part of the 2030 agenda. The action agenda was subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015, as contained in the annex thereto. This constitutes a pivotal moment in the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and General Assembly resolution 69/214: the conclusion of a long preparatory process rooted in the Rio conferences and the beginning of a new era, that of the implementation of the 2030 agenda. In the months that follow, the consequences and implications of this new agenda for existing mandates must be articulated, particularly those explicitly addressing sustainable development, so as to enable the building of synergies and to ensure that existing and new mandates are mutually reinforcing.

2. The present report should be read in conjunction with other reports submitted to the General Assembly on sustainable development.

II. Follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

3. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want",¹ established several intergovernmental processes which contributed to the formulation of the 2030 agenda, in particular the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (see A/68/970) and the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing (see A/69/315), which also contributed extensively to the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. In addition, the summary and recommendations developed by the President of the General Assembly based on the four one-day structured dialogues held during the sixty-eighth session of the Assembly on possible arrangements for a facilitation mechanism to promote the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies have paved the way for the decisions taken on this mechanism in Addis Ababa.

4. The sustainable development goals are integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. Targets are defined as aspirational and global, with each Government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account national circumstances. Each Government is called upon to decide how these aspirational and global targets should be incorporated in national planning processes, policies and strategies. The sustainable development goals build on the

¹ General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

foundation laid by the Millennium Development Goals, seek to complete the unfinished business of the Goals and respond to new challenges.

A. High-level political forum on sustainable development

5. In the 2030 agenda, the high-level political forum on sustainable development is called upon to assume a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level, working coherently with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other relevant organs and forums, in accordance with existing mandates. The agenda underscores that effective linkages need to be established with the follow-up and review arrangements of all relevant United Nations conferences and processes, including on the least development countries, the small island developing States and the landlocked developing countries.

6. The creation of the high-level political forum on sustainable development was at the heart of the reform of the institutional framework for sustainable development decided at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. It held its third meeting from 26 June to 8 July 2015 under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, including a three-day ministerial segment.

7. The theme of the forum was "Strengthening integration, implementation and review: the high-level political forum on sustainable development after 2015".

8. Because the high-level political forum met when the negotiations on both the post-2015 development agenda and the outcome of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development were held, its ministerial declaration, as adopted by the Economic and Social Council, was procedural in nature so that the results of the ongoing negotiations would not be prejudged. In the declaration, the President of the Council was requested, on an exceptional basis and without setting a precedent, to issue summaries of the discussions held at the high-level segment and the high-level political forum as a contribution to the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda.

9. The 2015 meeting of the high-level political forum offered the opportunity to take stock and deepen understanding of some aspects of the new agenda. It provided an opportunity to discuss how to implement the agenda and mobilize various actors in that endeavour.

10. Participants discussed in more detail how the follow-up and review of the agenda should be ensured; how the high-level political forum could play a role in this process and more generally carry out its functions; and how the United Nations system could contribute to that effort.

11. During the discussions, Member States expressed their determination to equip the high-level political forum to serve as the core high-level United Nations platform for promoting and reviewing the implementation of sustainable development and the sustainable development goals. They also viewed the forum as a platform through which to instil coherence and implement new ways of working, including in the United Nations system. The forum has the potential to forge a new role for the United Nations as a platform for the development of Member States-driven international governance — a governance that integrates economic, social

and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and looks towards the long term and future generations while maintaining the focus on poverty eradication.

12. The main messages from the forum can be summarized as follows:

Implementation

- There is a need to learn from the lessons of the Millennium Development Goals experience — from both its successes and its shortcomings.
- National ownership will be critical as a universal and inclusive agenda is implemented, one that seeks to address inequalities between and within countries and “leave no one behind”.
- There needs to be transparency and accountability, which is an area where the high-level political forum can play an important role. Accountability should be understood in a broad sense, to include, for example, the accountability of the private sector in the context of the need for a transformative shift.
- A strengthened global partnership is needed, which could include a global framework designed to provide technology transfer and transfer of knowledge, based on North-South cooperation, with South-South cooperation as a complement.
- For successful implementation of the agenda, it is crucial to ensure coordination at all levels — national, regional and global — and build new partnerships among multiple stakeholders.
- The high-level political forum can provide policy guidance to help forge links among the different elements of the agenda. It could, for example, request the regional commissions, governing bodies and other intergovernmental platforms of United Nations entities — and the entire system — to undertake a review of their approaches and working methods so as to enable them to better support the implementation of the agenda.
- The high-level political forum should be “solution-oriented”. In this regard, meetings of the high-level political forum should allow sufficient time for sharing experiences and best practices, and addressing issues where implementation of the goals is off track, including the means of implementation.
- The high-level political forum should stimulate and facilitate collaboration for implementation. For this purpose, it should have a clear view of the readiness and capacity of all countries to implement the sustainable development goals. By assessing the status of availability of financing, technology and capacity-building for implementation in all countries — through country reviews, for example — the forum could help to direct support where it is most needed.
- The high-level political forum should spur major groups and other stakeholders of civil society to mobilize around the implementation of the agenda. Communicating the content of the agenda in a simple and compelling way will be important for the taking on of ownership by people.

Integration

- Twenty-three years after the holding of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development ("Earth Summit") (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3-14 June 1992), it is well recognized that economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development must be taken into account. The sustainable development goals and targets are integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable. Synergies are important, as are trade-offs.
- Integration can be understood from three perspectives: horizontal integration, encompassing how to ensure that different ministries and organizations will work together; vertical integration, encompassing how to ensure that there is coherence across different levels and that local, subnational and State authorities work together; and stakeholder integration, encompassing how to ensure that the various actors work together.
- There are high hopes that policy guidance derived from the high-level political forum will help link the different elements of the agenda. The forum should advance an integrated approach to the sustainable development agenda, one that addresses poverty eradication in a holistic manner and maximizes coherence among the various relevant sectors and priority action areas.
- The high-level political forum will have a clear-cut role to play in modernizing the way in which the United Nations responds to the development-related needs of the world. The forum needs to be the venue where integration of the work of specialized and other platforms and institutions takes place. It could provide guidance to coordination structures within the United Nations system such as the Environment Management Group, UN-Water and UN-Energy.
- Integrated planning is central to ensuring the implementation of a transformative 2030 agenda for sustainable development, inter alia, for the support of post-conflict and disaster-stricken areas. The United Nations system, including the regional commissions, can help countries integrate national strategies by providing technical assistance and support for the formation of these strategies.
- Integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development requires knowledge and skills, to be acquired through formal and non-formal education. I.e., science can help bring down silos.
- Integration can be supported through the development of multipurpose indicators which relate to more than one of the targets (e.g., water, food security and health).

Follow-up and review

- An effective follow-up and review framework is necessary to the success of the new agenda. The high-level political forum will play a central role in reviewing progress.
- The review framework should aim to create a culture of openness grounded in evidence and sound methodologies.

- While guidance on the reviews should not be overly prescriptive, it should be clear about what is expected. Among the principles to be put forward are the following: reviews should be voluntary and comprehensive, addressing progress on all sustainable development goals and means of implementation; they should support countries in making informed policy choices; they should be rigorous and evidence-based through use of reliable disaggregated data; they should be open to and inclusive of all stakeholders, building on existing platforms, bodies and forums; and developing countries should be given support through capacity-building in this respect. The process should be State-led. At the same time, it should integrate the voices of those on the front lines: citizens, civil society and other stakeholders.
- Follow-up should be carried out at multiple levels, extending from the local all the way to the global level, but the starting point and principal level will be the country level.
- It will be important to ensure that the social dimension plays a key role in the follow-up and review process. Topics of particular interest in national reviews should include those related to technology innovation and facilitation, capacity development and financing mechanisms for the sustainable development goals.
- Inclusive national reviews will inform regional and global reviews. Coherence should be ensured across the different levels.
- It will be important to achieve an adequate balance between comparability of national reviews, and flexibility and recognition of national ownership of, and sovereignty over, the reviews.
- Reviews at the regional level can serve as a platform for exchange of experiences and best practices and discussion of regional trends and cross-border and transboundary regional issues, and support regional cooperation and coherence in response to common challenges.
- Several models for peer review exist which could be drawn upon if Member States decide to follow that path. They include the universal peer reviews in the area of human rights, the African Peer Review Mechanism, reviews in the context of the Pacific Islands Forum and reviews by the International Organization of la Francophonie. Different regions can organize their own review processes utilizing existing regional and subregional organizations and processes and taking into account regional contexts.
- At the global level, the high-level political forum is mandated to conduct country reviews and will need to define how it will proceed and build on national and regional reviews.
- Thematic reviews will also be conducted. The high-level political forum should draw from thematic reviews conducted in other forums and examine issues in an integrated manner. Thematic platforms will be important for monitoring and follow-up in respect of the sustainable development goals. They will need to adapt to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and the goals. The forum should provide space for the inclusion of these platforms so as to enable them to showcase best practices and lessons learned as well as provide a basis for the forum's thematic reviews of the goals, bearing in mind

the interlinkages and synergies between the goals and targets, as well as relevant cross-cutting issues.

- The follow-up and review process should be streamlined to ensure that there is no excessive overlap and that the reporting process does not overburden countries or cause reporting fatigue, especially for developing countries. Duplication should be minimized.
- The importance of data was underlined. Disaggregated data will be crucial especially for ensuring that no one is left behind. Use of not only quantitative but also qualitative data would also be highly important.
- Ensuring that national statistical offices are ready to hit the ground running is essential. Resources will need to be mobilized for data collection and capacity development of statistical agencies, especially in developing countries.

Expectations with regard to the high-level political forum on sustainable development

- The high-level political forum on sustainable development will be where the international community looks at the “big picture”. It will provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations and track implementation of the sustainable development goals. It can ensure accountability and coherence within the United Nations system.
- The high-level political forum should offer a means for responding to new and emerging challenges, promoting the science-policy interface, addressing sustainable consumption and production, and considering the particular challenges of countries in special situations. It should be forward-looking, assess the long-term impact of policies and trends, and focus on building resilience.
- The decisions taken at forum meetings should resonate with all people, including women, children and youth, and disadvantaged groups.
- The forum should link together the work of all relevant processes, commissions, panels and other bodies that do not communicate with each other sufficiently. In this way, the forum could serve as an “early warning system” for international action, with the ministerial declaration providing concrete recommendations for actions.
- The forum will also be critical in helping to integrate all of the intergovernmental follow-up processes emerging from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, including the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, with the follow-up of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and the outcome of the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Sendai, Japan, in March 2015.
- The forum should be flexible enough to remain relevant for the entire period of the implementation of the sustainable development goals. Its agenda should maintain a balance between predictability and flexibility.
- Meetings of the forum at the level of the sessions of the General Assembly should focus on review of overall progress at the strategic level, and devote

time to consideration of new and pressing issues which need to be addressed by the international community.

- Ensuring the participation of major groups and other stakeholders in the forum, as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/290, will be crucial.
- Parliaments and local authorities need to be involved in the work of the forum. Parliamentary networks around the world that deal with a variety of issues can be utilized as useful platforms for monitoring.

13. In the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, to be considered by the General Assembly at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda (September 2015), the Secretary General, in consultation with Member States, is requested to prepare a report, for consideration at the seventieth session of the Assembly in preparation for the 2016 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, that outlines critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level. That report should include a proposal on the organizational arrangements for State-led reviews at the forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, including recommendations on voluntary common reporting guidelines, and should clarify institutional responsibilities and provide guidance on annual themes, on a sequence of thematic reviews and on options for periodic reviews for the forum.

B. Options for facilitating the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies

14. In 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development called for identification of options for a technology facilitation mechanism.² This process included eight workshops and structured dialogues convened by the President of the General Assembly in 2013 and 2014, based on whose recommendations the Secretary-General, in his synthesis report on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, entitled "The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet" (A/69/700) proposed to establish an online global platform building on and complementing existing initiatives, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders" (para. 125).

15. As a follow-up to the Secretary-General's proposal, the Inter-Agency Working Group on a Technology Facilitation Mechanism was initiated by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at the end of 2014.

16. The Working Group's work focused on the following work streams: (a) mapping of existing technology facilitation initiatives, including support for policy formulation and strengthening of technological capabilities and innovation systems; (b) identifying areas of synergy and areas of possible cooperation within the United Nations system on technology-related work; (c) developing options for a possible online knowledge hub and information-sharing platform; and (d) cooperating with relevant stakeholders on science, technology and innovation (STI) capacity-building.

² General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex, para. 273.

17. In this regard, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, in paragraph 123 of its Addis Ababa Action Agenda, decided to establish a Technology Facilitation Mechanism, to be launched at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda in order to support the sustainable development goals. The mechanism comprises (a) a multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the sustainable development goals to be convened by the President of the Economic and Social Council; (b) an online platform to serve as a gateway for information on existing science, technology and innovation initiatives, mechanisms and programmes; and (c) a United Nations inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the sustainable development goals, which will promote coordination, coherence and cooperation within the United Nations system on science, technology and innovation-related matters, enhancing synergy and efficiency, in particular to enhance capacity-building initiatives. The task team will also engage stakeholders from civil society, the private sector and the scientific community.

18. In the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Conference also decided that the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development would be informed by the summary of the multi-stakeholder forum. The themes for the coming multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the sustainable development goals will be considered by the high-level political forum on sustainable development forum, taking into account expert inputs from the United Nations task team.

C. Strengthening the science-policy interface

19. One of the functions of the high-level political forum, as defined in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and underscored by the 2030 agenda, is to strengthen the science-policy interface, inter alia, through a global sustainable development report building on existing assessments, and enhance evidence-based decision-making at all levels (see General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex, para. 85 (k) and (l)).

20. The 2014 and 2015 meetings of the forum considered issues related to science, including emerging issues. In 2015, Member States emphasized that the forum could help ensure that topics related to the post-2015 agenda are in the research agendas of scientists around the world. It should provide a platform for science-policy dialogue, highlight trends, discuss policy-relevant analysis and translate outcomes of science-policy debates into action, thereby contributing to agenda-setting. The interface function would involve communication among policymakers, science communities and civil society. Not only "Western science" but also traditional knowledge and various perspectives are important for this dialogue.

21. Member States also expect the forum to identify and discuss emerging issues. Many emerging issues and grand challenges were identified in the discussion. The science behind emerging issues needs to be made available to policymakers more systematically. The Global Sustainable Development Report should deliver to the forum a concise analysis of emerging issues and global challenges.

22. In preparation for the forum in 2015, the Secretariat produced the 2015 edition of the Global Sustainable Development Report,³ with a view to facilitating discussion on the science-policy interface.

23. Extensive inputs were sought for this report from the United Nations system, scientists, government officials and stakeholders. More than 500 independent scientists and experts from many United Nations entities and affiliated organizations located in all regions contributed to the report. A crowdsourcing exercise was carried out in the six official languages of the United Nations and some 187 science briefs were submitted. Following a public review, a number of those briefs were incorporated in the report.

24. The Report endeavours to present a range of scientific perspectives and to be policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive. It offers concrete suggestions on how to strengthen the science-policy interface at the forum. The Report examines the sustainable development goals as constituting an interlinked system, analysing how the goals are interrelated through their targets, and how progress towards one goal may depend on and contribute to progress towards others. Such an integrated assessment of the sustainable development goals and the 2030 agenda may be a standard feature of future Global Sustainable Development Reports. There are chapters of the Report that illustrate the multiple interlinkages across the sustainable development goals. The Report provides a survey of scientific findings on a series of pressing sustainable development issues involving oceans, seas and marine resources and human well-being; the cross-cutting issue of disaster risk reduction; industrialization and its links to sustainable consumption and production; and innovative uses of big data in Africa. Chapter 6 highlights the state of the science-policy interface in countries in special situations. The Report also examines emerging issues from various perspectives.

25. The Global Sustainable Development Report was discussed at the forum. Member States underlined that the Report should inform intergovernmental discussions and should be clearly linked to the implementation, follow-up and review of the sustainable development goals, focusing in particular, on the interlinkages of the goals and identifying emerging issues. Thematic chapters could be linked to the agenda of the high-level political forum.

26. The inclusive approach of the 2015 edition of the Global Sustainable Development Report was welcomed by Member States, who stated that the Report should continue to be produced in collaboration with all relevant United Nations organizations in particular, draw on peer-reviewed sources and avoid duplication of the content of other reports.

27. Regarding the periodicity of the Report, some Member States expressed a preference for a yearly issuance, while others preferred that it be issued only every four years so as to be aligned with the meeting of the forum under the auspices of the General Assembly. A combination of possibilities was also considered.

28. Subsequently, in the 2030 agenda, to be considered by the General Assembly at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, the President of the Economic and Social Council was invited to conduct a process of consultations on the scope, methodology and frequency of the Report as

³ Available from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1758GSDR%202015%20Advance%20Unedited%20Version.pdf>.

well as its relation to the progress report on the sustainable development goals, the outcome of which should be reflected in the 2016 ministerial declaration of the forum (para. 83).

D. Sustainable consumption and production

29. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, in paragraph 226 of its outcome document, adopted the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns (A/CONF.216/5, annex). The General Assembly in its resolution 69/214 requested that the reporting of the board of the 10-year framework of programmes and its secretariat be made to the high-level forum through the Economic and Social Council. The progress report on the 10-year framework of programmes for 2015 was contained in a note by the Secretary-General dated 31 March 2015 (E/2015/56).

30. The high-level political forum, at its 2015 meeting, convened, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, an interactive dialogue on sustainable consumption and production which included reporting by the Chair of the board of the 10-year framework of programmes. Member States stressed that sustainable consumption and production constitute an integral and cross-cutting theme within the sustainable development goals framework, which is mirrored in national sustainable consumption and production uptake in policies and programmes. It was recognized that sustainable consumption and production require government support and have to be incorporated in budget and planning systems. Citizens should be engaged in fostering change in values and behaviours. The involvement of the private sector, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, was perceived as critical to success. Member States recognized the progress made in the implementation of the 10-year framework of programmes and highlighted that it should be fully utilized as a global mechanism for advancing the implementation of sustainable consumption and production. The sustainable consumption and production platform for small island developing States under the framework was found to be a useful initiative. A key role for the forum in the future will be to provide the 10-year framework of programmes with leadership and strategic directions.

E. Regional forums on sustainable development

31. For the high-level political forum to fully respond to its mandate, it needs to provide a space for capturing the regional dimension of sustainable development. The General Assembly mandated the regional commissions to contribute to the work of the forum, including through annual regional meetings. The regional commissions and their subsidiary bodies are critical in bringing concerted regional voices and perspectives to the global level. They can also play an important role in establishing an effective link between the national and global levels for implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 agenda, given their ability to tap into the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders.

32. Since the holding of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the members of the regional commissions have established regional

forums on sustainable development in three regions.⁴ A regional forum was also held by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and future modalities are currently being discussed in ECLAC. The regional forums are multi-stakeholder platforms and represent an important step in further fostering regional voices on the implementation and follow-up and review of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

33. The reports on the second cycle of regional forums are contained in a note by the Secretariat (E/HLPF/2015/3).

F. Partnerships and voluntary commitments

34. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development duly acknowledged that partnerships and voluntary commitments for sustainable development were complementary to the political outcome. The Secretary-General was invited to establish and maintain a comprehensive registry of voluntary initiatives, which was to be periodically updated, fully transparent and accessible to the public.

35. The United Nations Secretariat accordingly launched the Sustainable Development in Action Registry shortly after the Conference. The Registry, which contains detailed descriptions of all registered voluntary initiatives, also facilitates access to other registries and initiatives or "action networks" that promote sustainable development and that have catalysed voluntary commitments around specific themes. These include the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, the United Nations Global Compact, the Every Woman, Every Child initiative, the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative, the Action Network on Sustainable Transport and the partnerships for small island developing States that emerged from the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States.

36. In addition, since the holding of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the Secretariat has prepared three annual special reports on the progress of multi-stakeholder partnerships and voluntary commitments directed towards working towards sustainable development. The reports, entitled "Sustainable Development in Action", also identify trends in this area of work.⁵

37. In the post-2015 development era, multi-stakeholder partnerships are expected to play an increasingly important role in the implementation of sustainable development. Sustainable development goal 17 recognizes multi-stakeholder partnerships as important vehicles for mobilizing and sharing the knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources required to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, particularly developing countries.

38. The third International Conference on Small Island Developing States underlined the importance of genuine and durable partnerships. In paragraph 101 of

⁴ The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) regions. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) dedicated a session to the theme of the high-level political forum.

⁵ The latest (2015) report is available from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdinaction/2015report>.

its outcome document, entitled "SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway",⁶ the Conference requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States, to present recommendations, including through the use of existing intergovernmental mechanisms, for a partnership framework to monitor and ensure the full implementation of pledges and commitments through partnerships for small island developing States. On 25 June 2015, Maldives, as the chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, hosted, with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, a special event on small island developing States partnerships. Member States and United Nations system entities reported on small island developing States partnerships and emphasized that a robust review and follow-up of such partnerships need to be underpinned by data collection and data analysis. The General Assembly provided further guidance on the framework in its resolution 69/217, in which it emphasized that the partnership framework should be open and adaptable to the priorities and realities of small island developing States and consistent with other relevant processes and mechanisms in order to promote efficient and effective follow-up to the partnerships launched at the third International Conference, and to encourage new, genuine and durable partnerships for the sustainable development of small island developing States. The Secretary-General accordingly made recommendations for initial consideration of the framework based on the responses to a survey and comments made at a small island developing States partnership dialogue held before the high-level political forum. Those included: (a) form an informal group, or a "Friends of SIDS", to support the follow-up of existing small island developing States partnerships, and promote and advocate for the launch of new ones; (b) organize, on an annual basis, an action-oriented, results-focused informal multi-stakeholder small island developing States partnership dialogue as a half- or full-day event, within existing resources, at the margins of the meetings of the forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council; (c) organize regional multi-stakeholder small island developing States partnership dialogues through existing forums notably the regional commissions (ESCAP, ECLAC and ECA), in close collaboration with small island developing States and partners; (d) encourage the organization of national multi-stakeholder small island developing States partnership dialogues; (e) develop a standardized reporting mechanism for partnership progress reports; and (f) continue to maintain and further develop the Small Island Developing States Action Platform.

39. As mandated by the SAMOA Pathway, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs developed the Small Island Developing States Action Platform, which hosts all of the partnerships that stemmed from the Conference. It also includes the United Nations Implementation Matrix, a tool that focuses on areas for actions by United Nations entities and identifies associated lead responsibility for and links to existing and new partnerships.

G. Major groups and other stakeholders

40. Building on the practices of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, the process whose purpose is to elaborate a post-2015 development agenda has been marked by an unprecedented openness and engagement of civil society.

⁶ General Assembly resolution 69/15, annex.

41. The high-level political forum is positioned to continue to carry forward this inclusive and participatory approach. Ambitious provisions were outlined in General Assembly resolution 67/290 on the participation of major groups and other stakeholders in the forum's work. Building on the practices of the Commission on Sustainable Development with respect to engaging the nine major groups in its work, there has also been an increased engagement of diverse actors, groups and networks of civil society in the post-2015 development agenda negotiations.

42. As mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/290, major groups and other relevant stakeholders submitted discussion papers to the 2015 meeting of the high-level political forum HLPF on the forum's theme (E/HLPF/2015/2). Major groups and other stakeholders also formed an informal open-ended working group to coordinate their preparations for the forum, including the selection of lead discussants and other speakers for the different sessions.

43. In June 2015, the working group also organized a workshop to explore new coordination structures and forms of collaboration among the major groups and other stakeholders that would fit the needs of the high-level political forum and support its work from multiple perspectives.

III. Mainstreaming of the three dimensions of sustainable development by the United Nations system

44. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development called for the further mainstreaming of the three dimensions of sustainable development throughout the United Nations system, and requested the Secretary-General to report through the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly on progress made in that regard.

45. The third report of the Secretary-General on the topic (A/70/75-E/2015/55) was issued on 30 March 2015. Building upon the findings contained in the two previous reports (A/68/79-E/2013/69 and A/69/79-E/2014/66), that report highlighted how the new sustainable development goals can inject new impetus for cooperation and the mainstreaming of sustainable development throughout the United Nations system. The report placed a strong focus on strategic plans as core instruments for mainstreaming integrated approaches in various entities. It looked ahead at how to enhance the role of existing evidence-based evaluation functions in assessing progress against the post-2015 development agenda.

46. The report examined efforts of inter-agency coordination mechanisms to support Member States with coherent and integrated thinking as was the case during the sessions of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The impact of the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals is already being felt across the United Nations system. At the same time, the United Nations needs to further strengthen its efforts to prepare for delivering country-level support, helping Governments to deliver the new development agenda at home, and review progress at all levels. The report highlighted ongoing efforts of the United Nations system to adjust its modus operandi, examined the role of the quadrennial comprehensive periodic review and the need to learn from Millennium Development Goals follow-up processes.

47. The report recommended that the Secretary-General map United Nations system support across the sustainable development goals, as part of the next quadrennial comprehensive periodic review survey and seek the views of programme countries on how effectively the United Nations is supporting them in developing integrated policies and institutions for achieving the sustainable development goals. It also recommended that the United Nations system and its governing bodies assess the balance among economic, social and environmental issues in their work, align their strategic plans with the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda and break silos in their work. It is also important that the United Nations system implement the framework developed by the Environment Management Group for advancing environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system. Innovative inter-agency arrangements will be needed to support the work of the high-level political forum and other intergovernmental platforms, building on the experience and approach of the technical support team that assisted the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

IV. Preparing the high-level political forum for the post-2015 era: next steps

48. Clearly, based on the current year's high-level political forum debates, the 2019 meeting of the forum, under the auspices of General Assembly, will need to be a landmark event. In order to ensure this, the annual meetings of the forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council during the period 2016-2019 will need to conduct (a) comprehensive, effective and inclusive reviews of individual sustainable development goals or related cross-cutting themes, with all goals reviewed in a four-year cycle and (b) national voluntary reviews of implementation of the entire agenda, while also promoting implementation providing high-level political guidance and recommendations, increasing the science-policy interface, addressing new issues and discharging its other functions. An effective and innovative Global Sustainable Development Report will be critical.

49. The ideas expressed by the participants in the 2015 meeting of the high-level political forum to gear the forum for the fulfilment of its role after 2015 represent a useful complement to the guidance that will be provided by the outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda.

50. Yet, in order for the forum to fully deliver on its mandates, important steps will need to be taken by Member States in the short to medium term. During the meeting of the forum, some Member States suggested that there was a need to elaborate a road map focusing on how to prepare for the 2016 meeting of the forum and realize the vision for the forum. This road map was also mandated by the 2030 agenda. The present section highlights some of the ideas in this regard, including those that were put forth by forum participants.

Empowering the forum to provide high-level political guidance

51. The creation of the high-level political forum responded to the need to elevate discussions on sustainable development at the United Nations to the highest level. The adoption of the 2030 agenda, centred on sustainable development, reinforces

this need. Therefore, in going forward, it will be critical to ensure that the high-level political forum can deliver on its function, which is to provide high-level political guidance and recommendations for sustainable development.

Defining a programme of work and themes

52. During the 2015 meeting of the forum, Member States stated that it is important that the programme of the forum directly address issues of relevance to all countries.

53. In the coming few years, the forum will need to further elaborate the functioning of the review architecture and define its working methods. In this regard:

- In order to ensure that a full, in-depth picture is obtained of the progress on all 17 sustainable development goals, within a four-year forum cycle, a subset of sustainable development goals would be reviewed in a given year, with the help of diverse intergovernmental thematic platforms, making use of the integrative strength of the goals. This could follow the goals in numerical sequence (e.g., review of four goals per year, with goal 17 examined every year).
- Nexus approaches: these would entail looking in depth at connections among a subset of sustainable development goal areas and examining the status of scientific knowledge on the various links (see chap. 3 of the 2015 Global Sustainable Development Report). In turn, the themes could be chosen to highlight issues that are coming up for consideration in the international agenda (e.g., cities in 2016); and the clusters would have to be flexible (ad hoc) in order to yield the highest value added (e.g., with respect to addressing “orphan” issues, as mentioned by some countries during the forum meeting). For example, there would be many interesting nexuses centred on cities. The challenge in following this approach is that a theme would need to be identified and agreed by Member States, leaving little time for the relevant intergovernmental platforms, the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other forums to meaningfully prepare their inputs into such debates.
- Cross-cutting issues: this would entail analysing a topic area in relation to the whole sustainable development goals system (see chap. 4 of the 2015 Global Sustainable Development Report where this was carried out for disaster risk reduction). It could be applied to, e.g., migration, which was mentioned in this regard during the 2015 meeting of the forum. In this case, the comprehensive thematic review of the sustainable development goals would have to be conducted separately.
- A variant of this approach would entail “systemic exploration of one sustainable development goal area”, which would involve examining one goal and its connections with the other goals in a systematic manner. In particular, this approach could also be applied to “old” sustainable development goals (education, health, etc.), which were components of the Millennium Development Goals, in order to provide a new perspective on the topics under consideration. This approach would allow for the identification of gaps in the scientific coverage of some of the links among the sustainable development

goals, as well as in terms of coverage of the links by the United Nations system.

For each of the options above, the preparatory documentation could include one chapter of that year's Global Sustainable Development Report. Additional insights could be gained by producing focused documents (or Report chapters) which would examine the topic from the perspective of "emerging issues", "countries in special situations", "science-policy interface", "sustainable development scenarios and modelling" and "stocktaking of innovative data approaches". In this way, the Report could support a comprehensive overview of the subjects at hand, allowing for forward-looking discussions which would integrate the perspective of various country groups.

The forum should provide for a dual-track approach, with identification of some themes three or four years in advance so as to allow for serious preparatory work, and a space within which to accommodate burning emerging issues.

54. It would be important that the theme for the 2016 meeting of the political forum, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, and, ideally, those for 2017, 2018 and 2019, be decided by Member States as soon as possible, in order to enable time to be dedicated to preparations and allow for meaningful engagement of all stakeholders.

55. The forum would also need to discuss how to concretely address new and emerging issues. Several options in this regard are highlighted in the 2014 and 2015 editions of the Global Sustainable Development Report.

Refining the methods of work of the forum

56. At the meeting of the forum, several Member States stated that the forum preparatory process should benefit from the full participation of Member States and be inclusive and transparent. This would ensure broad ownership of the forum's programme, meeting and outcomes. Some felt adequate mechanisms should be developed.

Review and follow-up of major summits and conferences on sustainable development

57. Despite their comprehensiveness, the sustainable development goals do not cover every sustainable commitment emerging from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and other major international conferences on various dimensions of sustainable development. For example, the sustainable development goals make no explicit reference to mining, an issue that is addressed in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (paras. 227 and 228). Guidance will be needed from Member States on how to efficiently cover such issues, while building on the 2030 agenda framework and the thematic coherence it provides.

58. Within specific areas of the sustainable development goals, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development provides useful guidance on concrete actions that need to be taken in order to achieve a particular target and the broader goal. For example, in the case of sustainable development goal 2, "End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture", which provides deadlines for achieving the

targets, the section of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development on food security and sustainable agriculture and nutrition includes a number of specific actions that, if executed, would contribute to realizing the goal. Other detailed policy guidance will be provided by the expert analysis related to goal-related thematic platforms.

59. Similarly, the SAMOA Pathway, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, adopted at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul in May 2011, as documented in chapter 6 of the 2015 Global Sustainable Development Report 2015, include concrete actions that can provide valuable guidance for the implementation of the sustainable development goals at all levels.

60. Prior to the adoption of the 2030 agenda, the General Assembly decided that the forum shall, inter alia, follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments from major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields, as well as their respective means of implementation (General Assembly resolution 67/290, para. 7 (d)). It is to be expected that a thorough and focused review of the agreed 2030 agenda within the forum, building on the detailed review activities of other intergovernmental bodies and platforms, including the Economic and Social Council and the Assembly, would make a substantial contribution towards fulfilling that particular mandate. At the same time, the forum is tasked with other mandates, not least of which is appropriate consideration of new and emerging sustainable development challenges.

Concrete preparation for the follow-up and reviews

61. The forum will play a decisive role in following up progress on the implementation of the new agenda. In doing so, the forum should build on the experience derived from existing review mechanisms.

62. As noted above, in the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, adopted for consideration by the General Assembly at the September 2015 summit, the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States, is tasked with preparing a report, for consideration at the seventieth session of the Assembly in preparation for the 2016 meeting of the high-level political forum, which outlines critical milestones towards coherent, efficient, and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level. That report should include a proposal on the organizational arrangements for State-led reviews at the high-level political forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, including recommendations on voluntary common reporting guidelines. It should clarify institutional responsibilities and provide guidance on annual themes, on a sequence of thematic reviews, and on options for periodic reviews for the forum.

63. With respect to the thematic reviews, it could be useful, as illustrated by the Global Sustainable Development Report, to systematically factor multiple perspectives into thematic reviews, including on emerging issues, countries in special situations, middle-income countries and regional perspectives, the science-policy interface, insights from sustainable development scenarios and modelling, and stocktaking of innovative data approaches. In this way, the Report could support a comprehensive overview of the subjects at hand, allowing for forward-looking

discussions which would integrate the latest science, knowledge and lessons derived from experience.

Finding concrete ways to strengthen the science-policy interface

64. The forum will need to further discuss how it intends to strengthen the science-policy interface, pursuant to its mandate. Chapter 1 of the 2015 Global Sustainable Development Report provides a detailed menu of options and possible actions in this regard. This being the case, it could be a useful starting point for reflections in that direction. Ideas also emerged on this subject from the forum meeting.

Providing the high-level political forum with adequate support

65. The forum needs to be strengthened in order to properly fulfil its roles. In order to deliver on its ambitious functions, the forum will need a strong, efficient and well-equipped secretariat.

66. During the 2015 meeting of the forum, some Member States stated that the forum will need to be adequately resourced. In December 2015, Member States will approve the regular budget of the United Nations for the biennium 2016-2017. This should be taken into account.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

67. Progress has thus been achieved in follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, in particular with respect to the definition of the post-2015 development agenda and the role of the forum. The 2030 agenda for sustainable development, to be considered by the General Assembly at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, to be held in September 2015, has addressed this issue by assigning a mandate to the President of the Economic and Social Council to conduct consultations on the Global Sustainable Development Report and to the Secretary-General to produce the report described above.

68. In addition, the General Assembly may consider, at its seventieth session:

(a) Inviting Member States and other stakeholders to fully engage in and support the work of the forum as it prepares to exercise its role in full in 2016, and to provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development;

(b) Calling on Member States and other stakeholders to ensure that their engagement in the work of the forum enhances the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development by involving the economic, social and environmental policymaking communities intensively and in an integrative manner;

(c) Inviting the President of the Economic and Social Council to launch an informal process of the forum to enable reflection on how the forum, in addition to being the central locus for the follow-up of the sustainable development goals, also strengthens and supports the intergovernmental platforms related to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences on sustainable development, including that of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the SAMOA Pathway

and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, in accordance with its mandate. Such reflection could continue during the first week of the 2016 meeting of the forum;

(d) Deciding that forum national implementation reviews in 2016 should focus on how countries are transitioning to and preparing to implement the sustainable development goals;

(e) Also deciding the theme for the forum's 2016 meeting under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, as well as, possibly, its programme of work until 2019, when the forum will meet under the auspices of the General Assembly. Alternatively, the Assembly could entrust the President of the Council with defining the theme based on broad consultations;

(f) Inviting the President of the Economic and Social Council to take the necessary actions to prepare the meeting of the forum in a transparent and inclusive manner, engaging all member States as well as major groups and other stakeholders. The General Assembly could also consider inviting the President of the Council to make proposals to the forum at its 2016 meeting on how such a preparatory process might be institutionalized in the future and made effective and robust at all levels, with support from a strong United Nations inter-agency process;

(g) Calling on the United Nations system to make further efforts to integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in its work, including through undertaking reviews of United Nations system support to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, and inviting the Secretary-General to report on these efforts to the forum, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly at its seventy-first session as part of his report on mainstreaming sustainable development in the work of the United Nations system;

(h) Inviting the Economic and Social Council to decide on how the work of its various segments and subsidiary bodies will best contribute to promoting and implementing progress on the sustainable development goals, notably at the forum;

(i) Reviewing its own agenda and working methods so that its work reflects the issue of sustainable development and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.